



Athletes extra

Who they are and what they did to

Feminine physique

There's being in good shape and then there's Alaska Staff Sgt. Diane Singh-shape. This Drug Demand Reduction NCO won first place in the overall fitness category at the National Physique Committee's Last Frontier State Fitness, Figure and Bodybuilding Championships in April (drug free, we're sure). She competes in the figure category, which focuses more on muscle tone and symmetry rather than the muscle building itself. "I feel like I'm showing people that Soldiers have discipline, practice good health and are physically fit," she said. She went on to finish second in a division at the Emerald Cup Championship, the sixth largest bodybuilding competition in the world and the largest here. "I work out six times a week and always have to plan what to eat ahead of time."

-PFC. KARINA PARAQAN

Olympic bound

The third annual Army National Guard Combatives Tournament held in April had a record number of competitors, but the tournament may be known for the gutty performance of one female Army specialist from Idaho. Elisha Helsper took on the men in the flyweight division and made history as the first woman to reach the finals. She finished second – a disappointment though: "I came here expecting to take first," she said. "I felt like I should win it." And why not? Helsper said she grew up on the mat and is known in Mixed Martial Arts circles. The 27-year-old wrestled for her high school varsity team and has a 6-2 mark in women's MMA, including two pro

Batter up

She led the Air Force women's team to the full-services Armed Forces Women's Softball Championship title. She captained the Armed Forces All-Tournament team, which took second place at the 2009 Amateur Softball Association National Championship. She was named the 2009 Air Force Female Athlete of the Year. With those accomplishments, Master Sgt. Karrie Warren, 32, who's a member 601st Air and Space Operations Center at Tyndall Air Force Base, is a Guard athlete extraordinaire. This champion's breakfast usually includes oatmeal and a banana or whole wheat toast and eggs. She credits her father's insistence for her success in sport.

-CAROL CARPENTER

Stellar rise

Finishing a marathon on the 50-yard-line of the University of Nebraska Lincoln's Memorial Stadium with a large crowd is made better when you're the top National Guard finisher. That's what Oregon 1st Sgt. Seven (no, it's not Steven) Richmond did at this year's Lincoln/National Guard Marathon in 2 hours, 42 minutes, 24 seconds. Bravo! What's really remarkable is that it is only his second year of running seriously. He said a runner's background doesn't matter. All that matters is the work you put in prior to the race. "I am a great example. I didn't start running until I was 34. Look at me now."

-TECH. SGT. ALEX SALMON

Quiet brain

Recuperating from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder tends to limit your options, but don't tell that to Texas Army Spc. Shawn Porter – he took gold in the inaugural Warrior Games in May competing in the 10-meter air rifle standing/non-supported and the 30-meter recurve-bow open events. The 136th Military Police Battalion Soldier was deployed to Afghanistan in 2009 but had to be medically evacuated after being diagnosed with a tumor. While recovering from surgery to remove it, he was diagnosed with the PTSD. This athlete extraordinaire felt that keeping active would help him recover. "The intense six to eight hour rifle and archery training is helping me to quiet my brain," he said. "When I shoot I can only focus on one thing and I believe the sport has helped me therapeutically."

-CMSGT. GONDA MONCADA



deserve it

Skiers & shooters

Skis were made to go downhill—right? Not if you're a biathlete. You have to ski uphill first with an eight pound rifle on your back to enjoy the thrill of the downhill, and do it over and over again on trails more hilly than a motocross course. The Guard has two biathlon stars: Utah Sgt. Jeremy Teela has been on the last three U.S. Olympic biathlon teams and is a seven-time U.S. National Champion; and Vermont Sgt. Jesse Downs has dominated Guard biathlon over the past few seasons. Did you know that Nordic skiers have the highest VO2 max levels of endurance athletes?

Not just the dogs

All extraordinary athletes must be able to endure. Staff Sgt. Harry Alexie and his dog team endured 1,159 miles in more than 12 days over the frozen Alaskan countryside in last year's Iditarod. They finished 37th in the race while squeezing in two to three hours of sleep at infrequent rest stops. One 130-mile stretch of trail along the Yukon River took two days to complete because of headwinds and drifting snow. And don't think the dogs do all the work – mushers have to run up hills to lighten the load. Unlike most athletes, this Kwethluk native doesn't train in the weight room. He gets his conditioning from doing chores like carrying heavy buckets of dog feed, cleaning the yard, hitching the team up and going for training runs.

Mr. 402

The highest PT score of all time? Nebraska Pfc. Holden Isley may have it when he did 132 push-ups and 114 sit-ups in two minutes and ran two miles in 11 minute, 53 seconds, at basic training in late 2008. Those scores earned him 402 points on the extended scale of his Basic Combat Training Army Physical Fitness Test, one of the highest his drill sergeants 3rd Battalion, 13th Infantry Regiment at Fort Jackson, S.C., had ever seen. One DI was so impressed that he wanted the APFT score card laminated and hung inside the bay to motivate future recruits. "I wanted to leave something here so that people would remember my name," said Isley. The second best score in the company was 319.

-DANIEL TERRILL

Contender

Spc. Samuel Vasquez, a Pennsylvania Guard Soldier, has more than 100 fights under his belt. None was more important than at the All-Army Boxing Trial in April where he defeated a formidable opponent to claim light-middleweight champion. "He's disciplined, he trains hard, and it pays off. I'm so very proud of him," said his father. Vasquez will compete in the U.S. championships in July in Colorado and then go to Camp Lejeune, N.C., where American fighters will take on Olympic hopefuls from 26 other countries in October. "These are all stepping stones to getting to the Olympic Trials in 2011," Vasquez said. "If I finish in the top eight in my weight class (in July), I get a seed in the Olympic Trials."

Sore feet

Twenty one marathons in 21 days? Sounds impossible, but Army Col. Jack Mosher and Maj. Jay Brock shared the load on this 21-day, 550-mile "Resiliency Run" from Maine to Washington D.C. dedicated to encouraging the warrior spirit in everyone. Their objective over the three weeks: raise awareness of military and family wellness programs, increase support for the long-term care of veterans, and avoid blisters.



Who's your pick for an extraordinary Guard athlete. We want to know. E-mail us at editor@On-Guard.ng.army.mil.